

# Aligning Recognition and Awards With NASA's Values and Expectations

**An Internal Study Team Report  
on Using Rewards as a Strategic Management Tool  
October 11, 2002**

## **The NASA Vision**

To improve life here,  
To extend life to there,  
To find life beyond.

## **The NASA Mission**

To understand and protect our home planet,  
To explore the universe and search for life,  
To inspire the next generation of explorers  
... as only NASA can.

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# From the Study Team . . .

During the course of our study, we wrestled with recognition management concepts with an open mind and personal reflection. Judgments were suspended, and divergent perspectives were acknowledged before we formed our recommendations. Ultimately, our final conclusions were founded on the premise that the principles and values our employees share are the driving force behind all our accomplishments. Mindful of realities, our findings present a starting point for Agency executives to sort out against other business management imperatives. Within this context, each study team member below expresses full support to the vision for change as framed by the executive summary to this report.

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- ◆ **Chris Williams** (Headquarters, for Organizational Learning Advice)
- ◆ **Don Wolford** (Goddard, for Workshop Facilitation)

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# I. Executive Summary

The study goal was to determine the degree of alignment between formal recognition programs and the Agency's values and performance expectations, and, where beneficial, how managers can effectively use recognition programs to move the organization toward achieving its mission and human resources objectives.

The team collected and reviewed an extensive amount of external and internal data to identify the critical factors for developing, using, communicating, and assessing recognition practices, highlighted by the following:

- ◆ Application of systems analysis techniques,
- ◆ Site visits to best practice companies,
- ◆ Focus group interviews across NASA Centers, and
- ◆ Program briefings by NASA Awards Officers and Executive Service POCs.

Our analysis concludes that while the current award programs are being administered adequately, we encourage the design and execution of a future vision for recognition management that strengthens the alignment between recognition and awards, and the Agency's performance expectations.

To achieve this vision, we identified four areas of improvement opportunity. All four areas are important in forming an effective platform for strategic recognition management across the Agency, and they reinforce each other in systematic ways. Our recommendations are summarized below and further explored in the Data Analysis section of this report.

## **Improvement Opportunity 1: Instill more accountability for the proper execution of the recognition and awards systems.**

The most commonly cited benefit of recognition and awards programs is their ability to align employee behavior with an organization's strategic goals. The companies we visited emphasized that alignment alone does not make these programs successful and credit the attention to proper execution and coordination as a key driver to any success. For best-practice companies, managers see this linkage as part of their program and communication roles, and not as an added-on assignment.

Internally, focus group participants voiced mixed views about who is receiving awards and expressed much confusion about award criteria. And although some local mechanisms are in place to check the linkage between rewards and strategy, having management involved in making that connection frequently and in detail will ensure that it becomes transparent across the organization.

The challenge will be in developing effective tools and compelling managers to provide feedback to their employees. The key actions to instill a greater level of accountability for recognition management are the following:

- ◆ Establish and communicate a vision for granting awards that is consistent with the leadership messages about NASA's future and commitment to recognition and awards for getting performance results.
- ◆ Review, strengthen, and publish award criteria to systematically ensure their clarity and to incorporate the Agency's goals, performance outcomes, values, and desired behaviors.
- ◆ Create a single body for a One-NASA voice on performance culture and recognition, with Center representation, that integrates the various Agency and Enterprise awards programs.

- ◆ Flesh out how to incorporate a valid review of award management practices as part of the current performance management factors in executive and management performance plans.
- ◆ Begin developing the organizational capability for a more open and informed system about the rationale for awards, and to help executives and their direct reports become more comfortable in working in an outcome-based and value-driven environment.

### **Improvement Opportunity 2: Create additional flexibility in performance incentives.**

Like NASA, a majority of the companies in our study maintain centralized recognition and awards systems with decentralized implementation. A review of our current usage of authorities shows that most of our Centers are using most of the available flexibilities in regulations and have even created numerous local awards. Unlike NASA, companies are more systematic about giving awards at the time of the employee's contribution and make greater use of peer and nonmonetary recognition.

For NASA, the issue is about how to build some of this additional flexibility in Center programs yet continue to validate and retain best practices at the local level. The key actions to create more flexibility in our reward services and practices are the following:

- ◆ Improve the timely processing of Agency Honor Awards, and
- ◆ Share and encourage the use of best practices with Awards Officers, such as peer awards, nonmonetary awards of greater-than-nominal value, and giving awards out publicly within organizational meetings.

### **Improvement Opportunity 3: Educate the entire workforce on award programs and practices.**

Companies emphasized that the transparency of the recognition and awards processes was a key driver of its success, and thus a key educational goal. One company executive said that it is extremely important that we educate not only our employees but supervisors and managers as well . . . and you are only as good as your manager in some instances. A company practice in getting the word out about their awards programs was to make things as simple as possible—but no simpler than needed—and then provide the information in as many formats as possible.

From our internal focus groups, participants indicated three to one that award processes are not entirely known or clear. Another concern is that NASA has a significant number of award programs that are being communicated through different offices, such as inventions and contributions, executive bonuses, honorary, cash programs, external awards, Space Flight Awareness, and many local programs.

A coordinated education plan generates a common understanding and knowledge about what is expected. It generates personal commitment, common understanding within teams, and helps employees to be more efficient and effective in their work. This enables the workforce to know what is intended and managers to have the tools to engage employees for producing results. Moreover, publishing and explaining the criteria and practices for giving recognition multiplies the impact of this communication plan in advancing the Agency's agenda.

The key actions for an "entire workforce" training approach on giving awards are as follows:

- ◆ Provide recognition and awards information to the workforce through a variety of communication formats and vehicles, such as Web-based training, virtual orientations and tours, quick reference guides, Agency brochures, supervisor-manager sessions, executive workshops, new employee orientation briefings, and handbooks and desk guides.

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**A coordinated education plan generates a common understanding and knowledge about what is expected.**

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**We must project confidence in our ability to support business management decisions with awards program data.**

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- ◆ Ensure that educational information includes specific behaviors that translate Agency values, generic criteria for performance awards, as well as techniques for providing feedback for supervisors, managers, and executives.

**Improvement Opportunity 4: Enhance the organization's ability to use recognition and awards program data to support business decisions.**

The team focused on data-management capability because it saw that benchmark companies were comfortable in measuring the benefits and impact of their award systems, and had sophisticated technology applications for their reward nomination and approval processes. This was evident at their executive, line manager, and award program manager levels, and it was a visible component of their workforce communications.

Moreover, metrics and automation are becoming a top priority for Federal agencies, with an emphasis on measurement likely to grow because it is part of good management and mission accountability. Recently, NASA has moved forward with information technology systems for human resources processing, but the cutting edge for business systems functionality is artificial intelligence and insight generation. Accordingly, organizations can expect to increase their investment in information management.

The key actions to effectively support business management decisions with recognition program data are as follows:

- ◆ Institute a systematic process to regularly collect employee feedback on recognition and awards, and to use this feedback to make process improvements over time.
- ◆ Provide recognition and awards information to managers so they know what other managers do.
- ◆ Ensure that the future HR-Core system captures all award data (honor, inventions, certificates, team awards, etc.) and automates the nomination and approval process.
- ◆ Measure the impact of recognition and awards improvement initiatives on employee satisfaction.

*Proposed Implementation Strategy*

The team's recommended actions are packaged to address and move forward on a recognition management strategy for the future. In early 2003, Center Directors and Institutional Program Offices would review the team's findings to identify and prioritize improvements based on the perceived impact on the workforce. Using these priorities, an implementation and evaluation plan is established and initiated by July 2003. After a sufficient amount of time, the Agency would assess the impact of all changes to report successes and lessons learned.



## II. Introduction

Why study recognition and awards? Recognition programs are important strategic tools for increasing employee performance and for aligning employee achievements to organizational goals. According to a recent multi-year Gallup Organizational Survey, “employee recognition is a key dimension of a great workplace.”

As for NASA, indicators to look at recognition management practices have been mounting for years. Over the last decade, the Agency received many requests for new awards, implemented new regulations, and put into practice a new performance appraisal process that places a greater role on the awards system to document and communicate performance excellence. Meanwhile, NASA organizations were developing local processes and standards for rewarding employees.

Looking ahead, we can anticipate further attention to accountability, performance results management, and measures of effectiveness. These circumstances argue that it is an appropriate time to look at investments in recognition and reward services in their totality.

The study team included members from across all NASA Centers, with half its membership from the human resources community, engineering, science, equal opportunity, and resource management workforce. The national union officers were notified in November 2001, and the team held its kickoff workshop in January 2002.

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**Recognition programs are important strategic tools for increasing employee performance.**

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### III. STUDY SCOPE

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**Alignment  
serves as the  
common thread  
tying all our  
reward  
programs  
together.**

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The primary objective of this study was to determine the degree of alignment between recognition and awards with the Agency's values and performance expectations. Broadly speaking, recognition is anything an employee may hold of value in the relationship with the employer (for example, promotions, work environment factors, pats on the back, pay, retention allowance, etc.). However, the programs specifically covered in this study were formal awards such as the Agency Honor Awards, executive bonuses, and other performance awards.

The study focused on alignment because "it is the one ingredient of recognition management that serves as the common thread tying all our reward programs and services together. It connects the employees to the organization, what the Agency is trying to do, and how they can fit in. If we communicate and do this well, it creates a sense of employee belonging and empowerment for producing results."

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

### Vision for Giving Awards

The analysis begins with a desired reality for recognition management to which the whole organization can aspire—a reality where awards are being granted . . .

for the *RIGHT CONTRIBUTION* . . . advances the Agency's agenda to align values and performance expectations, provides organizational learning, and strengthens the relationship between employees and management.

to the *RIGHT PERSON* . . . when fully deserved, to those employees who meet clearly understood criteria and with full explanation of the accomplishment being recognized.

at the *RIGHT TIME/EVENT* . . . in an appropriate manner, without undue delay, and of sufficient value to be meaningful.

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**By using  
recognition and  
awards as a  
focused  
strategic lever,  
the results can  
be more  
significant.**

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NASA had in place the basic elements for moving toward this vision—an active awards program, an established performance management process, and published strategic goals. With vision in hand, the next step was to assess a large amount of external and internal information to categorize areas of excellence and improvement opportunities for the Agency. The challenge was to determine which best practices were adaptable to the Agency's cultural and organizational needs.

### Gap Analysis

NASA is using recognition and awards as administrative tools and getting those kinds of results. As the team looks at these programs systemically and in terms of a desired state, our awareness increases about what recognition management alignment can do. Now, seeing awards as a focused strategic lever, the results can be more significant.

An indication of how significant a return can be expected from an effective awards program was demonstrated by Watson Wyatt in a comprehensive 2001 study covering 750 publicly traded companies. The study used quantitative data over three years to link financial and organizational performance to specific human capital practices. One implication drawn from the study findings is that employers can expect as much as seven percent improvement in profitability, shareholder, and market results when improving the following specific practices by one standard deviation:

- ◆ Trust in senior leadership is actively engendered,
- ◆ Managers demonstrate the organization's values,
- ◆ Rewards are linked to business strategy,
- ◆ Top performers receive better pay than average performers,
- ◆ Employee satisfaction is high,
- ◆ Action is taken on employee opinion survey feedback, and
- ◆ Employees give ideas to senior management.

To better understand the features of an effective recognition and awards system, an extensive study of external practices was conducted with the American Productivity and Quality Center. Of 13 organizations recognized for their excellence in this area, the Agency ranked 9th, and the top 5 companies selected for site visits scored an average of 50 percent above the Agency in realizing benefits around aligning business strategy and mission with employee behavior and demonstrating increased organizational effectiveness through measured results of the recognition and awards systems.

These benchmarking and research findings indicate that superior recognition management practices are a leading indicator of organizational and mission performance. Moreover, organizations that allocate attention and priority to those specific practices will generate greater performance results.

### **Determination of Organizational Readiness**

Acknowledged by the recognition management experts and executives with whom the team interviewed, awards systems must be integrated with an organization's mission and reward strategy. The team's approach was not to consider systemic changes without a general sense of the transformation it would entail. To make this assessment, the team reviewed the following information:

- ◆ The Agency's use of current award authorities,
- ◆ Viewpoints and data from recognition program managers and employees,
- ◆ Successful practices with recognition and awards at the companies visited,
- ◆ Previous studies and surveys of NASA, and
- ◆ Recurring recognition management concerns.

The conclusion was that NASA has in place the basic elements for moving toward a strategic vision of recognition management and getting greater performance results, specifically: an active awards program, an established performance management process, and published strategic goals.

Moreover, the team saw a common trend between companies and the Agency in the infrastructure and design of awards programs. Seventy percent of the companies reported that their recognition and awards systems are structured with centralized oversight and decentralized implementation. This allows them to align with organizational goals at the top levels, but gives local units the flexibility to use recognition and awards programs in a creative way according to individual needs. Similarly, NASA has traditionally delegated human personnel management authorities to NASA Centers whenever practical and has emphasized this approach with oversight agencies and in its personnel function self-assessment program.

Through a gap analysis, there were some things the Agency was doing well, but some things were getting in the way. The team identified various methodologies to recognize employee contributions and validate their alignment with organizational strategy. The following sections highlight the specific gaps between our current reality and the desired future state for giving awards:

- ◆ Manager's communication role,
- ◆ Transparent award criteria,
- ◆ User-driven recognition and awards practices,
- ◆ Public recognition,
- ◆ Timely recognition,
- ◆ Nonmonetary awards,
- ◆ Information technology, and
- ◆ Awards system assessment.

#### *Manager's Communication Role*

Although best-practice companies seek to align recognition with strategic goals, they also suggest the importance of proper communication as a critical success factor. These companies recognize that the maximum impact comes from the proper coordination of recognition and awards communication tools and how well the organization's leaders preach it, teach it, and live it.

- ◆ The transparency of the recognition and awards process,
- ◆ Developing effective tools to provide feedback to employees,
- ◆ Articulating strong and clear criteria for each award, and
- ◆ Compelling managers to be accountable to their employees for the dynamics behind the recognition and awards process.

To have consistent and coordinated communications around the roles of all employees in achieving the goals of the mission, employees must clearly know the identified reasons for success or failure of a nominee in receiving awards. This approval process needs to be transparent so employees know how award decisions are made. In essence, why keep expectations a secret or tell workers after the fact when there are better ways to encourage the strategies and behaviors being sought?

**Linking awards criteria to mission and business goals creates a reinforcing cycle for producing results.**

The diagram illustrates a circular flow model for recognition and rewards, divided into three main sections: R1 (Resources), R2 (Recognition), and R3 (Recognition Program Goals).

**R1: Resources**

- Resources (Facilities, \$, PEOPLE) lead to Success.
- Success leads to Requirements.
- Requirements lead back to Resources.

**R2: Recognition**

- Hiring leads to Development.
- Development leads to Promotion.
- Promotion leads to Recognition.
- Recognition leads to Success.

**R3: Recognition Program Goals**

- Recognition Program Goals lead to Strategic Objectives & Value Driver Behaviors.
- Strategic Objectives & Value Driver Behaviors lead to Peer/Mgmt. Selection.
- Peer/Mgmt. Selection leads to Appropriate Time/Event.
- Appropriate Time/Event leads back to Recognition.

**Additional Elements:**

- Right Award:** A cloud shape connected to the Recognition process.
- Right Contribution:** A cloud shape connected to the Strategic Objectives & Value Driver Behaviors.
- Right Person:** A cloud shape connected to the Peer/Mgmt. Selection process.

Reinforcing Systems	Explanation
<b>R 1</b> Mission Accomplishment	The Agency goal is to achieve mission success. NASA defines this success through its strategic expectations. Next, program requirements are defined and resources assigned to accomplish the allocation of these programs.
<b>R 2</b> People Management	For our people to be effective in achieving mission success, we need to select the best, continue to develop their effectiveness, and appropriately promote and recognize them for their contributions to mission success.
<b>R 3</b> Recognition Management	NASA has developed a number of ways to recognize its people through executive, honor, and other award opportunities. Employees are selected for awards based on competitive peer or management processes that give awards for the right contribution, to the right person, and at the right time and place.
<b>Leverage Point</b>	Our leadership messages across the various systems must be consistent and committed to getting performance results and behaviors. Alignment between recognition system goals and higher-order mission goals is key to connect employees to the organization, what the Agency is trying to do, and how they can fit in.

As a means to ensure the alignment between organization goals and awards, companies continually strive for definitive criteria for each award by doing the following:

- ◆ Publishing both application criteria (who is eligible for what kind of contribution) and selection criteria (what level of contribution is expected);
- ◆ Providing guidelines to assist in determining that there was a clearly recognizable contribution beyond the employees' duties and responsibilities, and not just modeled duties listed in their job sheet; and
- ◆ Defining levels of recognition for going above and beyond the job in terms of identifiable impact on organizational and strategic goals.

This study also explored the balance in criteria between awarding successful outcomes versus appropriate behaviors. Seventy percent of the companies responding to our survey indicated that rewarding both behaviors and outcomes is equally important, and 15 percent indicated rewarding behaviors as slightly more important than outcomes. However, only 60 percent of these employers actually design their awards criteria to include behaviors.

NASA has taken some steps to strengthen its award criteria. A couple of years ago, the Space Flight Awards Program developed a leadership award based on strongly worded criteria, and, earlier this year, the Administrator established more specific criteria for executive recognition that identified value behaviors and business management objectives consistent with the President's Management Agenda.

However, more can be done. Internally, focus group participants voiced mixed views about who is receiving awards and expressed much confusion about award criteria. And, even a decade ago, the Agency identified concerns about its Honor Awards process, criteria, and goals centering on enhancing the quality of criteria and nominations.

Consider that in the last honorary award cycle, the Centers screened out 251 nominations for NASA medals and 78 nominations for the Group Achievement Award. Panels accomplished this with no more screening criteria beyond what the Agency published for these awards. As one example, the current criterion for a Group Achievement Award is an outstanding accomplishment “through the coordination of many individual efforts which contributed substantially to the NASA mission.”

Applying the lesson learned for stronger criteria specifically to these group awards, the team would suggest adding “with explicit consideration given to: 1) quality of results and the level of impact on NASA programs or operations; 2) effective management of cost and schedule; 3) customer satisfaction; and 4) team growth and capacity for future contribution, with additional credit for development of innovative approaches, the use of and contributions to lessons learned data banks, or success in responding to unforeseen crises.”

#### *User-Driven Recognition and Awards Practices*

Another key finding is that best-practice organizations make recognition and awards user-driven to reap successful results. They do this by soliciting employee and management input and feedback on a regular basis, and by funding ongoing cross-organizational employee improvement councils that focus on work environment and recognition management issues.

The most commonly employed tools to get honest and effective feedback about the employees’ experiences were formalized surveys and focus groups. Compared to NASA Centers, these best-practice companies were 50 percent more aggressive in getting employee feedback and 25 percent less reliant on using managerial anecdotes about employee perceptions. One site we visited indicated that their awards survey results were 40 percent more favorable than their comparison base.

Additionally, best-practice organizations often use employee councils as an indispensable part of the way in which their recognition and awards efforts further their corporate mission and serve as a unifying factor across the organization. Generally, these councils were as follows:

- ◆ Ongoing cross-organizational teams between 12–14 members;
- ◆ Selected from individuals committed to the well-being of the organization and well-respected by their peers to be an effective positive force within the organization;
- ◆ Involved in peer award approvals or identifying improvements for management action in the area of employee recognition or the work environment;
- ◆ Consistent with aligning the goals/objectives of their council with the overall strategy; and
- ◆ Able to distribute team minutes immediately to managers, with full minutes subsequently posted on the company’s intranet.

According to the responding companies and many NASA Awards Officers, employee satisfaction is the second-strongest benefit of recognition and awards systems, behind alignment. Thus, employers must find a way to embody organizational strategy through its reward systems, while at the same time bring satisfaction and motivation to employees. This may be accomplished by involving employees in the development and implementation of recognition programs, as well as soliciting and using employee feedback on a regular basis.

#### *Public Recognition*

A flexibility for NASA consideration is the increased use of public recognition in various forms and for all types of work categories and levels of management. Surprising an individual or group with recognition makes an incredible difference in morale and satisfaction with the program.

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**Organizations must address both factors of alignment and employee satisfaction in executing their awards programs.**

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**Recognition programs ought to leverage the power of having consequences, good or bad, at the time of achievement.**

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As indicated earlier, peer review, nomination, and recognition were built into some award programs at the companies visited, and for almost every type of award at one site. Most Centers are using some form of peer award, although the actual process varies widely. A typical variation used by several NASA Centers is a process in which any employee may make nominations, but management retains approval of awards. A noteworthy exception was a small Research Center that placed decisionmaking authority in the hands of an employee council that used a priority criteria matrix in screening nominations.

The team believes that public recognition in front of, and by, peers is not only motivating, but also plays a role in communicating and teaching others what management wants to recognize.

#### *Timely Recognition*

Motivation theory indicates that recognition programs ought to leverage the power of having consequences, good or bad, at the time of achievement. Recently, NASA has taken steps along these lines. Centers are looking for opportunities to move from scheduling awards around preset annual appraisal cycles (performance awards) to using those awards that can be given more readily at the time of contribution (on-the-spot and special achievement awards). Additionally, award check timeliness for technology briefs, inventions, and contributions is being cut dramatically from historical 12-month norms.

However, the Agency continues to struggle with concerns about its Honor Awards process, criteria, and goals centering on shortening the Honor Awards cycle time. The team reviewed past reports addressing this issue and, given the current delegations, brainstormed some actions what would demonstrate a commitment to manage the following process dates under the Headquarters Action Tracking System. If an office or Center cannot meet a deadline, this system requires a written request for an extension that is accepted or rejected.

- ◆ Set a date for Enterprise Offices and Review Panels to complete their review of Center nominations and get their recommendations to the Incentive Awards Board (IAB) within 45 calendar days after Agency's nominations submittal date.
- ◆ Set a date for the IAB to approve and get their final recommendation package to the Administrator within 70 calendar days after Agency's nomination submittal date.
- ◆ To provide more lead time for Centers to line up desired outside speakers for their local Honor Award Ceremonies, set and publicize the Agency Honor Award Ceremony date at the time the IAB approves their final recommendation package to the Administrator.

#### *Nonmonetary Awards*

Partners used nonmonetary recognition to a great extent, and one company found that this kind of reinforcement could cost 20 percent less than cash awards in changing employee behaviors. Other benefits are that the employee does not pay the taxes, it is quicker, and it has a longer motivational residual than an equivalent amount of cash.

Although the majority of the 76 awards designed at the Center level are nonmonetary in nature, most of these do not include gift certificates or merchandise at nonmonetary values of \$75 to \$100. The potential impact of these types of awards warrants further exploration and includes ways to provide nonmonetary awards at even greater value.

#### *Information Technology*

Coming as no surprise, best-practice companies were energetic about capturing and automating award data at all stages of the process. Some of the techniques were straightforward, and some were unique, for example:



- ◆ Use a check-off box for core values on all award nomination forms as the basis of a validity check on how organizations are recognizing strategic values;
- ◆ Automate all award nominations and approved awards to provide hands-on capability for managers to access recognition history on their employees and subordinate organizations;
- ◆ Provide line managers with reports of the distribution of awards with their peers and encourage them to provide feedback to the Human Resources Director and to one another; and
- ◆ Require text entry on specific criteria for each award type on automated nomination forms with text logic algorithms that ensure the justification does not simply mimic terminology in the criteria.

Two NASA Centers showcased local systems, one that captured and allowed the Awards Officer to monitor award approval timeframes from her console, and another that used edits and drop-down menus for completing the executive bonus nomination form. However, the Agencywide system lacks all of these features, and the opportunity to transition to a new Federal-wide system cannot be overlooked in this regard.

#### *Awards System Assessment*

Another potential opportunity uncovered in the team's gap analysis includes creating objective measurement tools to assess the impact of recognition and awards. Even where companies had organizational productivity measures, steps were taken to validate the system's effectiveness and to make certain that each component of their recognition and awards system was directly linked to a mission or business objective. They often achieved this through reality check mechanisms such as the following:

- ◆ Reviewing the number and quality of awarded candidates for each corporate goal, and identifying the "best of" as models and benchmarks;
- ◆ Reviewing the distribution of awards by core values;
- ◆ Reviewing (quarterly) a cascaded version of their balanced scorecard measures;
- ◆ Tying special events (such as picnics or luncheons) to specific goals or strategic objectives;
- ◆ Periodically rewarding the adoption of practices proven to get performance results; and
- ◆ Relating feedback to criteria in terms of how nominations failed or succeeded to address specific criteria and to identify where improving criteria would help.

Another aspect of program assessment to consider is the ability to create measures that generate line-level responses. As a case in point, consider the following NASA workforce survey data collected over the last four years (through Merit System Principles Questionnaires and National Performance Review surveys). Variations in item construction and comparative norms across these surveys make a coherent trend analysis difficult and sometimes interpretive.

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**Regular systems assessment seems to play an important role in ensuring the success of recognition and awards.**

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<b>NASA Workforce Perceptions Related to Recognition and Awards</b>	<b>1997 MSPQ</b>	<b>1998 NPR</b>	<b>2000 NPR</b>	<b>2001 MSPQ</b>
Response by managers/employees, unless otherwise noted	Percent Favorable Responses (Norm=Federal % or NASA Ranking)			
Cash awards depend on how well employees perform their jobs.	51% (39)			
Deserving employees are recognized and rewarded for their contribution.	49% (36)			
Recognition and awards are based on merit.		45%	50% (#2)	
How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?		56%	58% (#1)	
Awards depend on how well employees perform their jobs (employees only).				55% (37)
Supervisors/team leaders communicate expected job performance.	57% (55)			
Are you clear about how "good performance" is defined in your organization?		34%	38% (#5)	
My supervisor communicates what is expected of employees in terms of job performance (employees only).				70% (70)

Although some local mechanisms are in place at NASA to check the link between rewards and strategy, having management involved in making that connection frequently and in detail will ensure that it becomes transparent across the organization.

## V. RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

The team formed a few recommendations for its midterm briefing on honorary awards to the Incentive Awards Board, but reserved final judgment on most suggestions until their data analysis workshops in late July and August. A great majority of the final 42 recommendations received complete consensus, with none receiving more than 3 dissenting votes.

These recommendations were grouped under the following four areas of improvement opportunity:

- ◆ Instill more accountability for proper execution of the recognition and awards systems. (Accountability)
- ◆ Create additional flexibility in performance incentives. (Flexibility)
- ◆ Educate the entire workforce on reward programs and practices. (Education)
- ◆ Enhance data management capability to use recognition and award program data to support business decisions. (Data Management)

All four areas are important in forming an effective platform for strategic recognition management across the Agency, and they reinforce each other in systematic ways, namely:

- ◆ Public recognition of employees in front of peers (flexibility) is not only motivating, but also plays an important role in communicating and teaching others what results, behaviors, and values are important to managers (education).
- ◆ Effectively marketing an awards program or service (education) includes making the determination process more public and consequently obligates managers to follow the process when deciding whom to reward (accountability).
- ◆ A commitment to clear, strong criteria for granting awards (accountability) augments the relevance of any analysis of awards data (data management).
- ◆ Employee feedback (data management) tells managers which awards are working, and why, and identifies ways to more effectively use awards (flexibility).

The following table shows the specific relationship of each recommendation to the four areas of improvement opportunity.

A	F	E	D	All Awards
✓				1. Establish and communicate a vision for granting awards that is consistent with the leadership messages about NASA's future.
✓				2. Create a single-source one-voice Agency Direction Board for performance culture and recognition (with Center representation) to integrate ICB/PRB/IAB/Enterprise awards programs.
✓				3. Flesh out how to incorporate the review of award management practices as part of the current performance management factor in executive and management performance plans.
A	F	E	D	Cash Awards
✓		✓		4. Publish Web site (NASA People) with clearly stated criteria and a schedule for awards.
			✓	5. Circulate information on awards given by other managers (range, percentage of employees, or number) so managers know what other managers do.

	✓	✓		6. Give awards out publicly within organizational meetings.
		✓		7. Develop an employee handbook or desk guide on how to recognize employees.
	✓	✓		8. Compile information on peer awards processes used by all Centers and share with human resources at all Centers.
✓				9. Reinforce the use of the awards and recognition program at senior Agency level (e.g., include in Administrator's letter or statement).
		✓		10. Conduct initial and periodic refresher training for managers and/or Administrative Officers on all award available.
✓			✓	11. Collect and publish data on awards distribution to management. Award distributions indicate that managers throughout the organization meet their responsibilities in award write-ups.
	✓	✓	✓	12. Encourage the use of current flexibility for nonmonetary awards.
✓				13. Encourage and further research opportunities for the use of non-monetary awards of greater-than-nominal value.
✓			✓	14. Establish and disseminate generic criteria for performance awards for each level of achievement.
			✓	15. Institute ongoing employees input mechanisms (e.g., councils, focus groups, and surveys) and use feedback to make process improvement over time.
	✓	✓		16. Share information and best practices across Centers.
			✓	17. Develop a method to collect meaningful awards data across NASA.
<b>A</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Executive Awards</b>
✓		✓		18. Move from an unpublicized system to a more open and informed system about the rationale of the specific awards being given.
✓		✓		19. Share techniques for providing feedback to supervisors, managers, and SES.
✓				20. Identify (to be done by Administrator) goals and objectives for the current year to be written into the executive performance plans.
	✓		✓	21. Benchmark how other agencies do executive recognition (including non-Title 5 agencies).
✓		✓		22. Help executives to be comfortable in working in an outcome-based environment. Show or promote advantages of results over the other.
✓		✓		23. Senior leaders use values and expectations as a platform to teach and model new behaviors by example.
✓		✓		24. Train managers on knowing what their goals are and what behaviors best translate the Agency values.
✓		✓		25. Review current criteria to identify activity-oriented criteria that needs to be changed or eliminated, and identify/establish a standard for results in achievements.
	✓			26. Fix the pay system deficiency (that is, the gap in executive pay).
✓		✓		27. Incorporate the goals of the Agency in the award criteria.
✓				28. Annually check that award policy documents reflect the latest Agency goals and values.
	✓	✓		29. Develop a process to capture and transfer lessons learned, hints and tips, and fact sheets on frequently asked questions.

<b>A</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Agency Honor Awards</b>
✓		✓		30. Develop publishable criteria for each Honor Award, including performance outcomes and value-driver behaviors.
✓	✓	✓		31. As a pilot, exclude the Technology Achievement Medal from allocation guidelines by having Centers use a model award determination process around ETAM criteria.
✓				32. Ensure that all criteria are clear, aligned with Agency goals, values, and desired behaviors.
✓		✓	✓	33. Conduct annual reviews of Honor Program results at all levels against goals and provide feedback at all levels, including Centers.
✓				34. Determine criteria for the Administrative Support Medal.
✓		✓	✓	35. Provide all Centers and IPOs with a summary of nomination rejections and other quality review results (a consolidated report on issues, concerns, and problems identified).
	✓			36. Reduce the time for panel/IPO review by 50 percent and IAB Review time by 50 percent.
✓				37. Have Administrator/Senior Agency-level Managers champion the program and promote it through an all-hands meeting to instill as Agency value/goal.
	✓	✓		38. Introduce an ongoing Honor Award campaign that will include, but not be limited to, developing Agency logo/symbol/mascot, central theme, and a quick reference guide, and publicizing winners, etc.
		✓		39. Promote entire workforce training (i.e., Web-based training/virtual orientation/tour, quick reference guide, Agencywide brochure, brown bags, executive workshops, new employee orientation briefings, etc.). Add as mandatory component to new employee orientation.
✓		✓		40. Add topic of Agency Honor Awards programs, services, and practices as a component to Agency leadership training (e.g., MEP).
			✓	41. Automate, through HR-Core component, the nomination process, including writing submissions.
	✓		✓	42. Change nomination form to reflect occupational categories.
	✓			43. Allow real-time Honor Awards that can be approved by the IAB periodically and given out by the Associate Administrators closest to the actual accomplishment.

A=Accountability  
 F=Flexibility  
 E=Education  
 D=Data Management

## VI. PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

In early 2003, Center Directors and Institutional Program Offices will have a chance to review the team's final report to identify and prioritize improvements based on the perceived impact on the workforce. A study team member will be locally available to potentially assist in this review by providing background, details, and insights drawn from their personal experience with the subject material, workshop discussions, and site visits to the best-practice companies.

Using these priorities, the Headquarters Office of Human Resources and Education will coordinate an implementation and assessment plan that ensures a balanced attention to all four of the areas of improvement opportunity.

After the implemented changes are in place for a sufficient amount of time, the Agency would assess their impact and prepare a status report on successes and lessons learned.

A suggested component of this assessment process is to use a set of effectiveness measures for the recognition and awards programs and services. For this purpose, the study team developed the following set of measures that are tied to the awards vision statement and the four areas of improvement opportunity as presented in this report.

Effectiveness Measures	Details
<b>Organizational Performance Success:</b> A yearly analysis shows increased alignment of awards with Agency public service satisfaction, GPRA results, congressional testimony, and human capital accomplishments).	Focuses on organization's accountability and data-management capability for granting awards for the right contribution. Metric would receive high line-level interest and response, but may be relatively difficult to define.
<b>Quality of Nominations:</b> A review of award justifications assesses the writer's understanding of the process and criteria for specific awards. Captured as a percentage of nominations returned due to deficiencies in the write-ups, an overall reduction would indicate that there is improvement.	Focuses on our executives' and managers' understanding and flexibility for granting awards to those persons meeting established criteria with full explanation as to the accomplishments being recognized. This metric is relatively easy to implement to concretely show how education about awards results in new learning and application.
<b>Recognition Opportunity:</b> Annual analysis shows the degree and changes in providing an equal opportunity for recognition to all groups of workers. Slight discrepancies are expected from year to year, but over time there should not be much discrepancy.	Focuses on managers' accountability and systems analysis capability (data management and assessment) for granting awards to those persons meeting established criteria with full explanation as to the accomplishments being recognized. The data for this metric is already being collected, but will require a commitment to study underlying dynamics on patterns of events when they appear.
<b>Undue Delay:</b> The time from the recognized achievement event to the receipt of an award is short.	Focuses on using flexibility to optimize the motivational power in providing consequences at the time of an achievement. One possible metric is that cash awards are being given throughout the year with a reduction in the concentration of awards at the end of the year.

<p><b>User-Driven Feedback:</b> The team identified various kinds of information that respondents could be asked through a formalized survey instrument or systematic focus group protocol.</p>	<p>Language for specific survey questions was not developed. A Governmentwide survey currently being administered by the Office of Personnel Management addresses some, but not all, of the focus areas that the team identified for recognition and awards.</p>
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## **Appendices**



## Appendix A

# DATA COLLECTION OVERVIEW

The study team realized that it needed to learn much about recognition management approaches, what advantages they may offer NASA, and where the Agency is today in terms of executing successful awards programs. This required data collection along two paths—externally, to gain firsthand knowledge from leading companies, and internally, to profile the current state of the organization's success in using recognition systems and tools. All data-collection activity was documented for background and future needs. It is summarized below and in other sections and appendices to this report.

### Previous Studies and Surveys

The team had access to two study reports on the Honor Awards process, criteria, and guidelines conducted in 1989 and 1990, along with assorted program files. From this material, the team chronicled the history of Honor Award guidelines and activity over the last 40 years. This material provided comparative baseline data on Honor Awards frequencies and revealed where program success was being achieved and specific improvements that were tried but failed to resolve recalcitrant concerns.

Workforce perceptions about awards, available from two different survey instruments, provided a baseline that was limited somewhat by variations in item construction and level of survey administration. In both cases, the instruments were not part of a systematic survey-based change process and provided statistical results only. The surveys included the following:

1. **Merit Systems Principles Questionnaire:** Administered by the Office of Personnel Management as part of an Agencywide review of NASA in 1997 and again in 2001 comparing NASA to constructed Governmentwide norms.
2. **National Performance Review:** The Administration conducted three surveys from 1998 to 2000 to track changes in “reinventing” Government, provided rankings to each agency, and identified specific agencies that were the most successful on each survey item.

### Systems Analysis and Visioning

The initial team workshops were designed as learning labs to create a foundation and a set of tools for learning from, and with one another, and to frame the content of the study using the team's collective initial perceptions of current reality and desired future state for recognition and awards. The key organizational learning concepts and tools included core learning competencies, mental models, ladders of inference, reflective conversation practices, systems thinking and archetypes, and the completion of a Vision Deployment Matrix™. The Matrix offers a schema for strategically planning a large-scale change process that is meant to help translate the ideals of a vision into practical and effective action. From this lab work, the team leader identified priority data collection tasks to better articulate Center awards operations and formulate viable options for improvements.

### External Benchmarking

#### *Benchmarking Study*

The team contracted with the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) to gather process and metric data from companies recognized as leaders in making their recognition programs consistent with, and supportive of, their business goals. The APQC's established methodology is recognized as among the top-10 benchmarking methodologies. Sharer companies were identified through secondary research, expert recommendations, and a complete screening

process. Selection criteria was used in the screening process to identify five best-practice companies (see Appendix B for details).

Twelve of the study team members visited the selected best-practice companies to capture the tacit information on how companies get these results through their recognition management programs. During a two-day Knowledge Transfer Session in Houston, key findings from the visits were presented to pinpoint best practices and produce actionable change strategies.

#### *Human Capital Index*

In another external benchmarking effort, the team asked Watson Wyatt to use their Human Capital Index to map areas of improvement opportunity for the Agency in recognition management practices. The Index is based on research across 750 companies and demonstrates that specific human capital management practices are leading predictors of vastly superior financial and organizational performance. This exercise provided an estimate on the degree of benefit that a successful recognition and awards program could potentially have on mission performance.

#### *Secondary Research*

Throughout the progress of the study, the team leader and other members researched various sources of information as part of specific tasks assigned to them. Although much of this secondary research material was not systematically shared with the entire team, it indicated the scope of research needed to “fill the gaps” in the team’s current knowledge. From the Corporate Research Council, Watson Wyatt and the American Productivity and Quality Center, the team requested research on best-practice databases, motivating the technical worker, assessment strategies for recognition management, focus group protocol, and administrative award criteria.

### **Internal Benchmarking**

#### *Awards Program Presentations*

A series of E-briefings were conducted to hear from NASA Awards Officers and Executive Service Program contacts at all Centers and the Agency Space Flight Awareness Program Manager. These briefings had two objectives. First, it gave the speakers another opportunity to guide the study activity around some of the unique information needs regarding their local recognition management goals. Second, it provided an opportunity to revisit why we are operating our awards programs the way we do and to clarify what is making recognition practices as effective as they now are. The briefings began with a description of the Centers’ awards programs, followed by a given sequence of the following questions:

- ◆ What is our business model for leadership recognition? . . . for executive recognition? . . . for honorary recognition?
- ◆ Are we achieving its goals?
- ◆ Where is it working? Lets find out why.

#### *Awards Flexibility Profile*

As agencies explore new flexibility, they sometimes find that they can achieve their goals through already available authority. In recent years, the Office of Personnel Management has issued new regulations for awards, and NASA Centers have employed various flexibilities at a local level. In this context, the study team systematically reviewed the usage of current recognition management authorities to see what more NASA can do within the current system. See Appendix C for details.

### *Focus Groups*

A key study task was to get honest and effective feedback from our employees and managers about their work experience regarding awards. The team contracted with Creative Solutions International to help design a protocol (see Appendix D for details) and to conduct focus groups at several NASA sites.

The focus groups included diverse groups of about 250 employees from various occupational disciplines and skill levels (e.g., scientists, engineers, administrative, technical support, managers, and supervisors). The protocol solicited opinions about the Agency's current awards and recognition programs to determine how relevant and meaningful the programs are to individual employees, and to examine what, if any, impact the programs have on their performance, motivation, and job satisfaction.

### *Success Indicators*

During the latter half of the study, the team developed a potential list of 35 success indicators for measuring the effectiveness of recognition and awards systems. Two subgroups were asked to independently review the list and identify their top choices. Five indicators made both subgroup lists and represent a balanced approach for assessing program effectiveness by focusing across the components of the vision for granting awards and across all four areas of opportunity for improvement. See section VI of this report for more details.

## Appendix B

# COMPANY SELECTION PROCESS

Following the presentation of data from the Detailed Questionnaire, the NASA External Benchmarking team was tasked with selecting companies for site visits based on illustrated trends in the data, the scope of the benchmarking study, and the critical success factors for this study. Thirteen external companies submitted data for the study. This information was compared to the data submitted by the 10 participating NASA Centers.

### METHODOLOGY

APQC facilitated this selection using a Criteria-Testing Matrix (CTM) as a tool for identifying and weighting key criteria and assessing the companies' performance against each criterion.

Figure 1 illustrates a blank CTM. The first step in this process is to identify five to six criteria which are important for companies to exhibit and that will lead the team toward the desired results or potential solutions. The team then rates these criteria in three tiers. Less important criteria are weighted a 1, and more important a 5. Criteria of mid-level importance are rated a 3. In the effective application of this tool there should be at least one criterion weighted a 5 and one a 1. The criteria and weights are inserted in the first two rows of the matrix.

Figure 1

Criteria-Testing Matrix				
Ratings		Weightings		
1 = Low		1 = Low		
3 = Medium		3 = Medium		
5 = High		5 = High		
Partners	Criteria			
				Score
	1			0
	2			0
	3			0
	4			0
	5			0

The second stage of the process is to develop a rating system based on the companies' results from the available data for each of the criteria. For example, if the criteria were "high customer satisfaction," results would be divided into three categories, such as 1) companies with performance less than 60 percent receive a 1, 2) those from 61 percent to 80 percent a 3, and 3) greater than 80 percent a 5.

After the rating system is developed for each criterion, the appropriate data is input for each company. This rating is multiplied by the weighting and results in a score per criterion and summed per company to deliver a final score per company.

Using this system, a natural break should occur in the scores per company that enables the team to select companies for the site visit phase in a fair, blinded manner with the project's critical success factors in mind. Additionally, the team may identify two or three other factors that should be included in the overall company set but are not appropriate to be included as criteria. For example, the team may want to ensure that there is industry representation or multiple organizational structures present in the company set. Reviewing relevant data for those companies selected through the CTM can guarantee that this occurs.

## RESULTS

### *Criteria Selection and Weighting*

The study team arrived at six criteria after extensive discussion and review of relevant documents. The criteria are based on data collected through the Detailed Questionnaire and reflect the critical success factors identified by the larger team and the benchmarking subteam. Gaps in performance between the companies and NASA Centers were also considered. Table 1 illustrates the selected criteria and the explanation behind the development of each.

Table 1

Realized benefits in strategy	Organizations that noted benefits around aligning business strategy and mission with employee behavior (Q25) and demonstrated strategic effectiveness through measured results (Q28) <sup>1</sup>	3
Rewarded behavior	Organizations that seek to reward behavior as a part of the recognition and awards system (Q24)	5
Transparency of recognition and awards process	Organizations reporting a high degree of transparency in the recognition and awards process (Q21)	5
Realized benefit of integrative work	Organizations that seek to encourage and benefit from the results of integrative work through the recognition and awards process (Q26)	1
Attribution of successful programs	Organizations that cite communication tools as key factors in the success of the recognition and awards system through an ongoing communication plan, adequate employee education, and flexibility of the system to meet changing demands (Q27)	1
High impact on organizational effectiveness	Organizations demonstrating increased organizational effectiveness through measured results as an outcome of the recognition and awards system (Q28)	3

### *Rating of Performance*

Performance ratings were assigned based on the definition of the criteria and companies responses to the corresponding questions. Table 2 lists the criteria and performance levels determined by the team associated with each rating.

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<sup>1</sup> Question numbers (e.g., Q25) refer to questions in the Detailed Questionnaire.

Table 2

Criterion	Performance Level		
	Rating of 1	Rating of 2	Rating of 3
Realized benefits in strategy	Q25 less than 5 and/or Q28-strategic effectiveness do not know or do not measure	Q25 greater than 5 and Q28-strategic effectiveness 4 or 5	Q25 greater than 5 and Q28-strategic effectiveness 6 or 7
Rewarded behavior	Q24 behavior not selected	NA	Q24 behavior selected
Transparency of recognition and awards process	Q21 response of less than 5	Q21 response of 5 or 6	Q-21 response of 7
Realized benefit of integrative work	Q26-integrative work less than 4	Q26-integrative work 4 or 5	Q26-integrative work 6 or 7
Attribution of successful programs	Q27-flexibility, employee education, communication plan average score less than 5.0	Q27-flexibility, employee education, communication plan average score between 5.0 and 5.9	Q27-flexibility, employee education, communication plan average score 6.0 or greater
High impact on organizational effectiveness	Q28-organizational effectiveness less than 4 or do not know /impact/measure	Q28-organizational effectiveness 4 or 5	Q28-organizational effectiveness 6 or 7

### *Company Selection*

Once the criteria were rated and performance levels established, the data was input in a matrix, and the highest-scoring companies identified as potential candidates for site visits. The overall score ranged from 24 to 90. A natural break occurred between the sixth- and seventh-highest performing companies (number 6 scored 66 versus a 58 by number 7). This also fit with the ideal of five site visit companies in APQC's methodology and described by the project team. This allows room for one company to decline participation while maintaining a solid sample.

Following this process, the team referred to the three conditions discussed earlier as necessary for a balanced company set—a newly developed program, outcomes rated nontransparent and highly transparent, and companies that assess the program and those that do not. The company set reflects each of these characteristics in part, and thus was accepted by the team.

Six companies were selected for site visits and contacted by APQC regarding their willingness to participate in the site visit phase. Figure 2 depicts the results of the CTM process for the NASA recognition and awards study. NASA's data in aggregate was also assessed using the weighting and rating system of the CTM. Its cumulative score was a 48, which ranks it as the 9th-highest score out of 14.



Figure 2

<b>Criteria-Testing Matrix</b>							
<b>Criteria</b>	Realized benefits in strategy	Seek to reward behavior	Transparency of recognition and awards process	Realized benefits of integrative work	Attributes of successful programs	High impact on organizational effectiveness	
<b>Partners</b>							
	5	5	5	1	1	3	<b>Score</b>
1	1 3	5 25	5 25	3 3	1 1	3 9	66
2	3 9	1 5	3 15	3 3	3 3	3 9	44
3	5 15	5 25	5 25	5 5	5 5	5 15	90
4	5 15	5 25	3 15	5 5	3 3	5 15	78
5	3 9	5 25	5 25	3 3	3 3	3 9	74
6	1 3	1 5	5 25	3 3	3 3	1 3	42
7	1 3	5 25	5 25	5 5	5 5	3 9	72
8	1 3	5 25	1 5	5 5	5 5	5 15	58
9	1 3	1 5	1 5	5 5	3 3	1 3	24
10	1 3	5 25	5 25	1 1	1 1	1 3	58
11	1 3	1 5	5 25	5 5	1 1	1 3	42
12	1 3	5 25	1 5	3 3	1 1	1 3	40
13	5 15	5 25	5 25	5 5	5 5	1 3	78
<b>NASA</b>	1 3	5 25	3 15	1 1	1 1	1 3	48

## Appendix C

# NASA FLEXIBILITY PROFILE

### CENTER USE OF FY01 AWARDS FLEXIBILITIES

Available authorities are being used within NASA with employee suggestions and retirement awards used least frequently. Centers are using some form of peer award, although the actual process varies widely. A typical variation used by several Centers is a process in which any employee may make nominations, but management retains approval of awards.

<i>Type of Award</i>	<i>ARC</i>	<i>GRC</i>	<i>GSFC</i>	<i>HQ</i>	<i>KSC</i>	<i>LaRC</i>	<i>MSFC</i>	<i>SSC</i>	<i>Total "Yes"</i>
<b>Sup. Accomplishment/ Special Act</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
<b>Employee Suggestion</b>	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	6
<b>On-the-Spot</b>	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7
<b>QSI</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	7
<b>Retirement</b>	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	5
<b>Length of Service</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
<b>Time Off</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
<b>Peer Awards</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	7
<b>Nominate for External Awards</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
<b>Center-Unique Awards (details below)</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8

### NUMBER OF CENTER-UNIQUE AWARDS

Centers have created numerous (76) Center-unique awards. This is a minimum number, as more than one Center reported that there are additional Directorate-level awards that are not tracked by the HR Office. The majority of the Center-level awards are nonmonetary, and most monetary awards include some form of nonmonetary recognition, such as a plaque or certificate. Approximately half of the Center-level awards are available to groups/teams. As of May 2002, Centers gave a total of 405 monetary awards to groups; the great majority of these (352) were Special Act Awards.

	<i>ARC</i>	<i>GRC</i>	<i>GSFC</i>	<i>HQ</i>	<i>KSC</i>	<i>LaRC</i>	<i>MSFC</i>	<i>SSC</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Total Center-Unique Awards</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Monetary</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Nonmonetary</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Number for which Groups/Teams Are Eligible</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>

#### AGENCY HONOR AWARDS PROCESS

Centers do not prescribe additional screening criteria for the NASA Honor Awards beyond the Agency award descriptions and criteria, and all but one use a panel to review local nominations. The Centers are divided regarding the inclusion of nonsupervisory employees on this panel. Overall, the Centers screened out 251 nominations for NASA medals and 78 nominations for the Group Achievement Award.

	<i>ARC</i>	<i>GRC</i>	<i>GSFC</i>	<i>HQ</i>	<i>KSC</i>	<i>LaRC</i>	<i>MSFC</i>	<i>SSC</i>	
<b>Nomination and Review</b>									
<b>Who nominates?</b>	Sup./Mgr.	Sup./Mgr.	Sup./Mgr. Peers	Sup./Mgr.	Sup./Mgr.	Sup./Mgr.	Sup./Mgr.	Sup./Mgr.	
<b>Review by panel?</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	
<b>Nonsupervisory employees on panel?</b>	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	n/a	
<b>Additional Center-level criteria ?</b>	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
<b>Number Considered but Not Submitted to HQ</b>									
<b>Medals</b>	15	54	65	23	20	53	20	1	Total 251
<b>Group Achievement Award</b>	5	2	11	12	30	8	8	2	Total 78
<b>Recognition</b>									
<b>Center monetary recognition to awardees?</b>	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
<b>Center-level recognition to nominees who do not receive Agency award?</b>	No data	No data	No data	No data	Yes	No data	No data	No data	

## Appendix D

# FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Background

As part of the study's information-gathering effort, focus groups were conducted at seven NASA Centers to gather data from employees from various occupational disciplines and skill levels. The objectives of the focus groups were to determine how relevant and meaningful the Agency's current awards and recognition programs were to individual employees and what, if any, impact the programs had on their performance, motivation, and job satisfaction.

This document describes the interview protocol for the focus group phase of the awards and recognition study. It presents the guidelines used for selecting employees for the focus groups, as well as how the interviews were conducted and the data captured.

### Employee Selection and Notification

Center representatives were responsible for selecting the employees to participate in the individual focus group meetings using a selection method that ensured randomness and represented NASA's diverse workforce. The representatives provided notification to the employees as to the purpose, date, and time of the focus group meeting, and supported the focus group facilitator. Where applicable, Centers informed and/or involved the Center's union representative(s) in the process.

The goal was for each focus group to consist of between 8–12 employees, which consisted of the following:

- ◆ One group of scientists,
- ◆ One group of engineers,
- ◆ One group of administrative support personnel,
- ◆ One group of technical support personnel (trade professions),
- ◆ One group of professional administrative, such as human resources, procurement, finance, etc.,
- ◆ One group of managers who manage nonsupervisory employees (e.g., branch level), and
- ◆ One group of managers who manage other managers/supervisors (e.g., division level, SES).

If the employee population of the Center varied from these guidelines, Centers were free to adjust the groups to be more representative of that population. For example, a Center may not have had a significant number of technical support personnel; therefore, it would not have conducted a focus group of technical support personnel. On the other hand, if a Center did not have a large contingent of branch-level managers, it may have conducted two focus groups of managers. The only caveat was not to mix employees from the occupational groups as listed. Generally, Centers needed to invite between 16–18 employees to ensure that there were between 8–12 in each group.

Also, Center representatives were asked to notify the individual employees requesting his/her participation in the focus group. A sample memorandum, either mailed or e-mailed to the employee, was provided for their use. After forwarding the request, it was necessary (in some cases) to follow up with the employee in order to solicit a response. Also, Centers were asked to send a reminder to each employee who responded affirmatively to the date and time of the focus group a day or so prior to that date.

### Conducting the Focus Group

Center representatives should reserve a room, equipped with an overhead projector and two easels with flipcharts and markers, large enough to hold 10–12 employees and 2 facilitators. Paper and pens/pencils should be provided for each participant.

The following were the suggested steps for the facilitator in conducting each focus group:

1. Introduce yourself to the employees/managers. Ask each employee/manager to introduce him/herself and state where they work at the Center.
2. Let the participants know that the focus group will take about 1 1/2 hours.
3. Ask for the participants' permission to audiotape the discussion so that details can be better recalled; if there is any reluctance or objection, the discussion should not be taped.
4. It is important to set the tone of the meeting:
  - ☐ Review the purpose of the focus group phase of the study. Put the following objectives on a flipchart where the participants can see them:
    - ✓ To ensure that awards and recognition are positively impacting the morale, satisfaction, and effectiveness of the workforce.
    - ✓ To ensure that awards and recognition align with NASA's mission, vision, and values.
    - ✓ To obtain suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the awards and recognition programs.
  - ☐ Note that the focus group is targeted toward the examination of Agency-level formal awards and recognition programs. Although critical, the Center's awards programs and other organization-sponsored awards are not the explicit focus of this study. Put a list of award types with a brief description/definition on a flipchart so that it is clearly visible to everyone in the room.
5. Note that comments will be reported anonymously, but they will not be confidential. That is, participants should not say something they do not want to be reported.
6. It is best to conduct the focus group using two facilitators—one to ask the questions and probe, and one to capture the data. A flipchart should be prepared for each question and the data captured on each chart. Organize the flipcharts by question (see the Interview Protocol and Data Collection Worksheet on the following page).
7. Following the discussion, transfer the data from the flipcharts into the format shown on the following pages. Please be as specific as possible when reporting responses. If the participants agreed to be audiotaped, details can be better recalled for reporting purposes.
8. Manage your time so that you can get through all the questions (remember that the maximum time is 1 1/2 hours). One participant should keep track of the time and let the others know if they are going to run over. If participants appear to be stuck on one item, suggest that they write down their responses so that they can be incorporated into the final report.
9. In concluding the focus group:
  - ☐ Thank the participants for their time.
  - ☐ Restate, if applicable, that the audiotape will be used explicitly for recall purposes to summarize and prepare the report.
  - ☐ Note that the data will be summarized, without attribution, and a report will be prepared and provided to the Center's Human Resources Office and to each participant.
  - ☐ Note that a final Agency report will be available later this year and provided to each participant.

## Interview Protocol and Data Collection Worksheet

Type of Group (circle one): Scientist, Engineer, Administrative Support, Administrative Professional, Technical Support, Managers who manage nonsupervisory employees, Managers who manage other managers/supervisors.

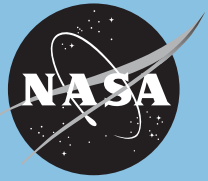
Question	Suggested Flipchart Set Up to Capture Participants' Comments
<p>1. Think of those times when you felt most appreciated for your work. What about those times made you feel appreciated and valued, and why?</p> <p><i>NOTE: Depending on response, you may have to probe to get the story.</i></p>	<p>Times Felt Most Appreciated What made you feel valued? Why?</p>
<p>2. Are the current Agency-level awards and recognition programs meaningful to you?</p> <p><i>NOTE: You might need to remind them of the major types of awards—monetary and nonmonetary:</i></p> <p>Monetary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Lump-sum cash for annual performance</li> <li>◆ Lump-sum cash for superior accomplishment (i.e., suggestion, special act/service)</li> <li>◆ Quality step increase for performance</li> <li>◆ On-the-spot/fast award of nominal value</li> </ul> <p>Nonmonetary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Time off from work</li> <li>◆ Agency Honor Awards (i.e., NASA Medal or NASA Certificate)</li> </ul> <p><b>Probe, don't let them answer yes/no!</b></p>	<p>Program Why or why not?</p>
<p>3. Can you describe the criteria for the Agency-level awards and recognition programs? Which criteria are clear and which are not?</p> <p><i>NOTE: You will have to pay particular attention to the responses, since the responses to this question and #4 should tell us a lot!</i></p> <p>Monetary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Lump-sum cash for annual performance</li> <li>◆ Lump-sum cash for superior accomplishment (i.e., suggestion, special act/service)</li> <li>◆ Quality step increase for performance</li> <li>◆ On-the-spot/fast award of nominal value</li> </ul>	<p>Program Clear criteria? Why or why not?</p>

<p>Nonmonetary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Time off from work</li> <li>◆ Agency Honor Awards (i.e., NASA Medal or NASA Certificate)</li> </ul> <p><b>Probe, don't let them answer yes/no!</b></p>	
4. Give us suggestions about how we can make the criteria for awards and recognition more clear and understandable.	Suggestions for Clear Criteria
<p>5. What performance behaviors and results should be recognized and rewarded given the new Vision of the Agency?</p> <p><i>NOTE: Discuss the process, as well as the output.</i></p> <p>Behaviors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Agility, entrepreneurial, commercialization</li> <li>◆ Concern for safety</li> <li>◆ Collaboration, knowledge science questions sharing, and inter-teamwork</li> <li>◆ Innovation and creativity</li> <li>◆ Respect for people</li> <li>◆ Personal integrity and accountability</li> </ul> <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Technology transfer and commercialization</li> <li>◆ Answers to public policy science questions</li> <li>◆ Inspire future explorers and teachers</li> <li>◆ Make safe, fast, green aircraft</li> <li>◆ Unveil even more challenging cosmic questions</li> <li>◆ Improved propulsion technology</li> </ul>	
<p>6.a. (Nonmanagers) Describe the process used by your management to determine which employees receive performance/cash awards and how much they receive.</p> <p>6.b. (Managers only) Describe the process you use to determine who receives performance/cash awards and how much they receive.</p> <p>NOTE: This is not about approval level per se, but the process to determine that the employee earns the reward over those who do not, and then how you determine a dollar amount for the award based on the level of performance/contribution.</p>	<p>Process Who? How much?</p>
<p>7. (Administrative only) Do you think there is a need for another NASA medal specifically for administrative support personnel (i.e., "Exceptional Administrative Achievement Medal")?</p>	Why or why not?
8. Give us some advice about how to grant awards for the right contribution, to the right people, at the right time/event.	Suggestions
9. Center-level questions.	









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